Chairman and Members of the
Corporate Business Scrutiny
Committee.

Your contact: Peter Mannings
Ext: 2174
Date: 12 March 2014

cc. All other recipients of the
Corporate Business Scrutiny
Committee agenda.

Dear Councillor,

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2014

Please find attached the following reports which were marked "to follow" on the agenda for the above meeting:

6.   Web Site One–Year Action Plan – Lessons Learned and Closure.
       (Pages 3 - 16).

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting next Tuesday.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Mannings
Democratic Services Officer
East Herts Council
peter.mannings@eastherts.gov.uk

MEETING	:	CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE	:	COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE	:	TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2014
TIME	:	7.00 PM

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2014

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF INFORMATION, CUSTOMER AND PARKING SERVICES

WEBSITE ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS AND CLOSURE REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To provide an update on the Council's website action plan for scrutiny.

- To present the continuous improvement actions now transferred to the Information, Parking and Customer Services Service Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE That:	
(A)	**The Council's achievements under the Website Action Plan be reviewed and Members consider the actions detailed within the Service Plan; and**
(B)	**The Executive be advised of any recommendations.**

1.0   Background

1.1   The web team commissioned an independent review of the website in October 2012 and used it to the establish the Website Action Plan approved by Corporate Management Team on 19th November 2012 and scrutinised by Corporate Business Scrutiny on 19th March 2013.

2.0   Report

2.1   Our On-line Aims

East Herts Council services must:

- Ensure customers can quickly and easily complete their top tasks, the things they want to do on-line.

- Make decisions about website content and services based on evidence and facts from customer use not opinions.

- Identify our customers' top tasks based on what they do, not on what they say they do.

- Keep content as concise and simple as possible.

- Act on customer feedback and behaviour.

2.2   Measuring Use

The Council measures task completion; so that customers can easily and quickly complete their top tasks. Measuring the number of page views and visitors gives an idea of how many people view website pages, but not what they are doing (or trying to do).

2.3   Top Tasks

2.3.1   User Identified Tasks

Analysis of the most common activities on the website indicates the top tasks users want to complete, as shown below:

Task Rating	(Jan to Apr) 2012/2013 : 130,426 total visits*		(Apr to Mar) 2013/2014 : 456,979 total visits	
	Task	Visits	Task	Visits
1	View Planning Applications	32,142	View Planning Applications	55,499
2	Contact the Council	7,285	Contact the Council	19,859
3	Job Search	6,894	Pay Online (General)	14,805
4	Pay Online (General)	4,456	Pay Council Tax	14,218
5	Pay Council Tax	3,683	Job Search	12,287
6	Online Benefits calculator	1,810	Pay/Challenge PCN	10,051
7	Pay/Challenge PCN	1,445	Online Benefits calculator	3,765

*After this time the European Regulations for monitoring web use changed creating a gap in user information, guidance from the Information Commissioners' Office has subsequently been amended to allow us to monitor use, this was re-established in

February 2013.

2.3.2   Commonly Expected Tasks

The Council monitors the tasks identified in the Society of IT Managers' (SOCITM) as "commonly expected", used to grade council websites.

In 2012, the outcome was:

- Object to a planning application (Unable to Complete)

- Apply for a job (Unable to Complete)

- Find refuse collection schedules (Successfully Completed)

- Find swimming pool opening times (Unable to Complete)

- Pay Council Tax (Successfully Completed)

In 2013, the tasks were changed by SOCITM, but the outcome was a significant improvement on 2012:

- Arrange collection of an old bed using online forms (Unable to Complete)

- Apply for a job (Successfully Completed)

- Object to a planning application (Successfully Completed)

- Find swimming pool opening times (Successfully Completed)

- Find Councillor details (Successfully Completed)

2.4   Website Size

In 2012, the Council's website contained over 7000 pages. By the end of 2013 this had been reduced by 2000 pages that had not been viewed by the public in over a year, and were causing the search engine to slow down, and return pages of unwanted links as results.

2.5   Page Content

Heads of Service are responsible for content and its production. The challenge is to support services publishing content less than one day a week, to do it to a high standard. The web team continues to review the top ten top content pages for each service, proposing improvements to quality and reducing the quantity of

information.

2.6   <u>Accessibility</u>

The 2013 SOCITM review (including report from the Royal National Institute for the Blind) continues to rate the East Herts website as accessible.

2.7   <u>Video on the Web</u>

The web team offer filming, editing and video deployment on the web for as a no cost service. This is a growing area of work, with a large number of video projects featuring Councillors and their work planned for 2014. Work completed in 2013 included:

- Recording, edit and broadcast of meetings held in external venues (such as Development Control meetings held at the Charis Centre and Football Club in Bishop's Stortford).
- Filming community project events, for example the 3Music event, using a multi camera set up with a volunteer crew.
- Filming marketing assets, such as the Love Your Market event, and the recent Community Leadership clips.
- Creating training assets, such as the Community Health video suite
- Commercial industry quality motion graphics and video effects including a suite of "virtual tours" to promote the venue hire business activities at Hertford Theatre.

2.8   <u>Search Engines</u>

In 2012, 69% of visitors used a search engine to find the Council's website; in 2013 this was 63%.

<u>Top 10 Search Terms Used on External Search Engines</u>

	Keywords (Jan – Apr 2012)	Visits	Council Google Ranking	Keywords (Apr 2013 – Mar 2014)	Visits	Council Google Ranking
1	east herts council	18,400	1	east herts council	20,972	1
2	east herts planning	4,297	1	east herts planning	6,087	1
3	east herts district council	3,362	1	east herts district council	5,532	1

4	east herts	3,228	1	east herts	3,443	1
5	www.eastherts.gov.uk	1,945	1	www.eastherts.gov.uk	2,807	1
6	eastherts	1,064	1	eastherts.gov.uk	1,517	1
7	east herts council tax	937	1	east herts council tax	1,493	1
8	east hertfordshire district council	817	1	recycling@eastherts.gov.uk	954	1
9	ehdc	760	2	http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/	891	1
10	East herts council planning	738	1	eastherts	822	1

2.9   Home Page

In 2012, 37% of visitors came in via the Home Page. This fell to 21% in 2013. The remainder use links and the specific service related links offered by search engines.

www.eastherts.gov.uk Top Entry Pages

Jan – Apr 2012 top entrance pages	Number of Entrances	Apr 2013– Mar 2014 top entrance pages	Number of Entrances
Home Page	49,073	Home Page	88,661
Online Planning	5,581	Planning and Building	20,452
Council Tax	4,830	Planning Decisions	18,896
Jobs and Careers	4,293	Council Tax	17,173
Housing	3,325	Waste and Recycling	10,690
Planning and Building	2,682	Housing	9,193
Contacting the Council	2,567	Contacting the Council	8,981
Waste and Recycling	2,475	Jobs and Careers	6,628
The Planning System	2,296	Bishop's Stortford Car Parks	5,700
Bishop's Stortford Car Parks	1,467	Electronic Payments	5,339

A new front page was deployed in 2013. The number of clicks taking users of the top content subsequently fell, making for quicker

journeys from the front page. E.g. Visitors seeking planning applications from the home page require only 1 click to access the on-line planning application page instead of 3.

The core service level pages were rebuilt, replacing pages of text with quick links to the most commonly used pages and links for more information set below them. This has also cut the journey (in terms of clicks). E.g. the parking services landing page offers the link to view or pay a penalty charge notice as the top link, reducing the number of clicks from 4 to 1.

2.10   Navigation

The search engine behind the Council's website was re-built in 2013 to provide a faster response, and a new method tracking the actual words people were using in their searches. This, combined with the removal of 2000 pages from the website, has resulted in a vastly improved search function. The work of re-writing content and tracking search keywords is reviewed every month to continuously fine tune performance.

- On average, 18% of visitors to our site use the search engine.
- 7% of visitors use the search box on the Home Page rather than use any other navigation option.

Search Words 2013

Words	% of Searches
Council tax	3.88%
Planning	3.77%
recycling	0.86%
housing	0.84%
building control	0.64%
parking	0.62%
local plan	0.60%
planning policy	0.49%
pay council tax	0.47%
pcn	0.43%

2.11   Web Action Plan Summary and Status:

- New Home Page – deployed and complete
- Search Engine re-write – deployed and complete

- Markets Video content – complete and launched

- Service level top 10 pages review - complete

- Service level dormant content cull – complete

- GovDelivery key pages identified and tagged – complete (with ongoing review)

- Deep content review and cull – ongoing monthly work task

- Search Engine keyword monitoring – ongoing monthly work task

- Customer Feedback monitoring and actions – ongoing monthly work task

- Key Landing Page optimisation – ongoing monthly work task

- SOCITM report review and associated actions – complete

- Usability report review and associated actions - complete

2.12 <u>Service Plan Actions 2014/15</u>

An excerpt of the Information, Parking and Customer Services Service Plan is presented in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

2.12.1 <u>Accessibility Review</u>

The website team will commission an expert agency, working with users with a wide range of physical, visual and cognitive impairments, to conduct a review of the website to assure compliance to the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 and specific user experience of the site. The review will cover published content, as well as other web content delivery platforms held on the East Herts network (e.g. maps, forms, Planning Online and ModernGov/Committees and agendas).

2.12.2 <u>Intranet Development</u>

The work undertaken to simplify and better organise content for customers needs to apply to the intranet, supporting all staff. Support services need to have landing pages focused on key tasks to ensure quick and efficient completion of any administrative or internal functions. The web team will manage a comprehensive review of Intranet use, staff requirements and an analysis of potential developments and efficiencies. An intranet action plan will be developed with internal/support services to improve the digital provision of internal and support services.

2.12.3 Member's Extranet

The Member's extranet is a key tool for distributing information to elected members. It is hosted within the same content management environment as the public website, but not connected to it. Committee Agenda and Minutes functions are handled via the ModernGov application hosted on the network, accessed via a web browser. Use of the Member's extranet is low, with small amounts of traffic to the training and pages offering service level information.

The web team will undertake a review of use, content and potential tools available working with members to address their concerns, wishes and ideas for the extranet. A Members' extranet action plan will be developed with Democratic Services to improve the digital provision of services for Members.

2.12.4 My East Herts

Many services are location based and customers may wish to search for or be informed about information relating to where they live e.g. customers may wish to see information about all planning applications submitted where they live. This will be branded as "My East Herts".

2.12.5 Customer Service Strategy and Action Planning

The Council will revise its Customer Service Strategy in 2014, looking at the challenges faced by our communities and their expectations, prioritising the response to these drivers of change.

An action planning phase will follow to support all services in responding to the approved strategy and developing service delivery to be fit for purpose for the next 5 to 10 years. This includes digital provision of services via the Council's website and other digital service channels such as mobile devices.

3.0   Implications/Consultations

3.1   Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report are detailed in **Essential Reference Paper 'A'.**

Background Papers
Corporate Business Scrutiny Report – Website Update and Acton Plan 19 March 2013.

Contact Member: Councillor Tony Jackson – Leader of the Council.
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IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:	**Prosperity** This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic opportunities and delivering cost effective services.
Consultation:	The Information Management team service plan is contained within that of the Head of Information, Parking and Customer Services which has been endorsed by Joint Scrutiny and Council including the actions presented in this paper..
Legal:	There are no statutory requirements arising from this paper.
Financial:	This paper does not present any financial implications, the service plan actions relating to the website have been approved by Executive on 4th March 2014.
Human Resource:	There are no human resources implications associated with this paper.
Risk Management:	The future actions to continuously improve the website are contained within the Information, Parking and Customer Services Service Plan with associated risks managed through the corporate risk management process. There are no risks arising from this report.

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Information, Parking and Customer Services - Service Plan 2014/15

						Connections	
			Action Plan				
Action Code	ACTION	What role will the service play? (Please click in the cell to select the relevant role by clicking on the drop down arrow)	Description (Target, Outcome, Critical Success Factors and Environmental Impacts)	Due Date	Lead Officer	If the action impacts on another service in terms of support/input, please specify below:	Links to partnership wide agendas: - Community Strategy - Health and Wellbeing
Corporate Priority: People *Strapline: Fair and accessible services for those who use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute*							
Deliver strong and relevant services							
14-IPCS01	Website Accessibility Review	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** An action plan to achieve Disability Discrimination Act/Web Content Accesibility Guidelines v2 compliance - and additional practical measures to support accessibility of the Council's website. **Outcome:** Assurance and actions to ensure the Council's website is as accessible as possible. **Critical Success Factors**: Funding, Service resources to amend web content, IT resources to amend any web based service provision, Digital Media and Information team resources. **Environmental Impacts:** none, electronic service delivery has a positive impact on reducing environmental impact of existing service delivery.	31 March 2015	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	Potential impact on all services based on way content pages presented. Potential impact on IT if forms or other presentation of service delivery on the website need amendments to improve accessibility.	None
Corporate Priority: Prosperity *Strapline: Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities*							
Deliver value for money and reduce our reliance on central government funding							
14-IPCS06	Scope Intranet Development	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** To identify the top tasks that will support staff to be efficient through use of the internet and establish a project initiation document to achieve them. **Outcome:** A clear development plan for the intranet based on user needs with funding requirements set out in a business case for consideration. **Critical Success Factors**: Digital Media and Information Team Resources, Funding for external support, funding for template changes, IT resources for development of potential business case, HR resources to look at staff support activities. **Environmental Impacts:** None - all electronically enabled processes will reduce the Council's environmental impact.	31 March 2015	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	HR are likely to be key service provider via the intranet and recommendations may impact their service design. IT resources in terms of capacity and capability to deliver internal intranet based service solutions for staff.	None
14-IPCS07	Customer Service Strategy	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** Adoption of East Herts Customer Service Strategy **Outcome:** Clear direction for service delivery goals and shaping how services will developed for our communities. **Critical Success Factors**: Member and Officer engagement, Head of Information, Parking and Customer Services free to progress work, linkage with Here to help cultural change. **Environmental Impacts:** Self-service and assisted service provision can reduce the Council's environmental impact.	30 September 2014	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	Strategy will impact future shaping of all services, the degree will depend upon gap analysis of current plans for service delivery against approved CS strategy.	None

	Action Plan					Connections	
Action Code	ACTION	What role will the service play? (Please click in the cell to select the relevant role by clicking on the drop down arrow)	Description (Target, Outcome, Critical Success Factors and Environmental Impacts)	Due Date	Lead Officer	If the action impacts on another service in terms of support/input, please specify below:	Links to partnership wide agendas: - Community Strategy - Health and Wellbeing
14-IPCS08	Customer Service Strategy Action Planning	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** To identify clear actions under each Head of Service that follow the direction adopted within the Customer Service Strategy. **Outcome:** Customer Service Delivery Plan **Critical Success Factors**: Support from Heads of Service and Directors, Resource to review existing service development work underway and see how that may be enhanced further given the Customer Service Strategy. IT support and resources on projects. Funding availability for new IT systems and solutions. Link to Here to Help. **Environmental Impacts:** Self-service and assisted service provision can reduce the Council's environmental impact.	31 March 2015	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	Action Planning will impact future delivery of all services, the degree will depend upon gap analysis of current plans for service delivery against approved CS strategy, service resources and priority.	None
14-IPCS10	My East Herts' Website Tool	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** Delivery of localised Council service information via a web interface **Outcome:** Enhanced service delivery for residents and Councillors, resolving top 5 location based service enquiries. **Critical Success Factors**: IT resources in developing the solution, Digital Media and Information manager resources in developing the solution. Service support in addressing data quality issues to enable location based searching and result presentation. Funding. **Environmental Impacts:** Self-service and assisted service provision can reduce the Council's environmental impact.	31 March 2015	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	IT resources in supporting development of eGGP mapping data to deliver text based location search results. IT and other service resources to tidy database information held to ensure compatible and accurate to be searched for local data by UPRN/post code	None
14-IPCS11	Scope Members Extranet	Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	**Target:** Clear member's extranet development plan based on user design with business case as required. **Outcome:** Better supported members, more able to be available to help their constituents and play an effective role as a member of the Council. **Critical Success Factors**: Member engagement, Democratic services support, funding, Digital Media and Information Manager resource. **Environmental Impacts:** Self-service and assisted service provision can reduce the Council's environmental impact.	31 March 2015	Head of Information, Parking and Customer Service	Potential impact on democratic Services and ModernGov development based on outcome of top tasks review.	None